1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

461 so impressed padres and rancheros; concordantly also, the manifestations of race hate, doubtless culminating among warriors on the warpath, are strongly contrasted with the abject docility of the Seri groups when at peace and in camp near Costa Rica and other ranchos—a docility far exceeding that of the Papago, whose personal dignity is an ever-present possession, or that of Yaqui, whose strong spirit so often breaks the curb of Caucasian control. So the observer of the Seri is impressed by the intensity of functioning along lines defined by their characteristic traits, and equally by the capriciousness of the functioning and the remarkably wide range between activity and inactivity which render them aggregations of extremes—the Seri are at once the swiftest and the laziest, the strongest and the most inert, the most warlike and the most docile of tribesmen; and their transitions from rôle to rôle are singularly capricious and sudden. At the same time the observer is impressed by the relatively long intervals between the periods of activity; true, the intense activity may cover hours, as in the chase of a deer, or days, as in a distant predatory raid, or perhaps even weeks, when the tribe is on the warpath; yet all the known facts indicate that far the greater portion of the time of warriors, women, and children is spent in idle lounging about rancherias and camps, in lolling and slumbering in the sun by day and in huddling under the scanty shelter of jacales or shrubbery by night—i. e., when their activity is measured by hours, their intervals of repose must be measured by days.

000 Summarizing those somatic traits connected with habitual functioning, the Seri may be considered as characterized by (1) distinctive pedestrian habit, (2) conspicuous hand-and-tooth habit correlated with defective tool-sense, and (3) pronounced segregative habit correlated with a highly specialized race-sense; yet they are characterized no less by extreme alternations from the most intense functioning to complete quiescence—the periods of intensity being relatively short, and the intervals of quiescence notably long.

●14 On reviewing the more conspicuous somatic structures and functions jointly, they are found to throw some light on their own development, and hence on the natural history of the Seri tribe.

Certain characteristics of the tribe strongly suggest lowly condition, i. e., a condition approaching that of lower animals, especially of carnivorous type; among these are the specific color, the centripetally developed body, the tardy adolescence, the defective tool-sense, the distinctive food habits (especially the consumption of raw offal and carrion), the independence of fixed habitations, and the extreme alternations between the rage of chase and war and the quiescence of sluggish repose. But these primitive characteristics are opposed or qualified by such features as the noble stature, the capacious and shapely brain-case, the well-developed hands, and the considerable intelligence revealed in native shrewdness as well as in organization and belief. Collectively the characteristics are in some measure incongruous; yet

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 MU31 Seri MU31

all are at least fairly compatible with the inference that the tribe is exceptionally (if not incomparably) low in the scale of general human development, yet at the same time highly specialized along certain lines; and the inference in turn is corroborated by the coincidence between the special lines of development and the peculiar conditions of environment characterizing the habitat of the tribe.

A striking correspondence between Seri physique and Seri habitat is revealed in the pedal development, with the attendant development of muscle and bone, lung capacity, and heart power, together with other faculties involved in the pedestrian habit. Seriland is a hard and inhospitable home; sea-food is indeed abundant and easily taken, but water is terribly—often fatally—scarce, and obtainable only by distant journeying from the places of easy food supply; moreover, the monotony of the diet is alleviable only by extensive wandering for the collection of vegetal products or severe chase after land animals; while the warlike spirit, apparently inherited from a still less humane ancestry and fostered by the geographic isolation, combines to keep the tribe afoot, avoiding waters, conducting raids, and moving constantly from place to place in the endless search for safety. There is a widespread Sonoran tradition that the Seri systematically exterminate weaklings and oldsters; and it is beyond doubt that the tradition has a partial foundation in the elimination of the weak and helpless through the literal race for life in which the bands participate on occasion. A parallel eliminative process is common among many American aborigines: the wandering bands frequently undergo hard marches under the leadership of athletic warriors with whom all are expected to keep pace, and this leads both to desertion of the aged and feeble and to increased strength and endurance on the part of the strong and enduring; yet it would appear that this merciless mechanism for improving the fit and eliminating the unfit attains unusual, if not unequaled, perfection among the Seri. Now pedal development is one of the special processes of peripheral (or centrifugal) functioning and growth involved in the general process of *cheirization*, which, coordinately with cephalization, defines human progress;[1] and this developmental process explains the specialization of the Seri along one or more lines, and connects the special development directly with environing conditions.

A notable correspondence between structure and function, of such sort as to reflect the habit and habitat, appears in the conspicuous manual development of the Seri. Enjoying a climate too mild to make houses necessary, finding animal food too plentiful to necessitate elaborate contrivances for the chase or milling or other devices for reducing vegetal food, provided by nature with material (in the form of carrizal) for an ideally suitable water craft, barred by geographic boundaries from neighboring tribes, and having neither material for nor interest in commerce, the denizens of Seriland were never forced into the way of mechanical development; yet their simple industries, involving as they

[1] The Trend of Human Progress, American Anthropologist, new series, vol. 1, 1899, p. 401.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

Seri race-sense and Seri race-type no less delicate than that between the stressful action and the stress-shaped structures of the tribe, and while the inception of both type and feeling may be ascribed to the isolated environment, it seems manifest that both have interacted constructively and in cumulative fashion through a significant process exemplified more clearly by this tribe than by others thus far studied. At the same time, analysis of the harmony between type and sentiment indicates that the lowly Seri are actually, albeit unconsciously, carrying out a meaningful experiment in stirpiculture—an experiment whose methods and results are equally valuable to students. The Seri gymnastic and the Seri stirpiculture are in close accord, in that both are conditioned by initially dilatory yet ultimately intense action; the results are equally accordant in that the one conduces toward individual vigor and the other toward a vigorous and distinctive stirp; while the excellence of the methods (viewed from the somatic standpoint) is attested by the magnificence of the product. Now, comparison of the stirpicultural Seri with contemporary tribes shows that the desert-bound folk have attained unequaled somatic development, and suggests that the intuitive stirpicultural processes have been rendered peculiarly effective through the persistence of that tribal isolation in which the processes apparently took rise; so the race-sense of the Seri may be regarded as the product of long-continued stirpicultural processes, initially shaped by environment, yet developed to unusual degree by somatico-social habits, kept alive largely through continuous environmental interaction.

Summarily, the Seri are characterized by noble physique, by peculiarly swift and lightsome movements, by great endurance coupled with capacity for vigorous action, by animal-like symmetry and slowness of maturation, and by various minor attributes combining with the major features to form a distinctive race-type; and they are still more conspicuously characterized by an acute race-sense which holds them apart from all aliens. At first sight, several of their somatic attributes seem incomparably primitive, yet analysis of the attributes in the light of certain laws which they exemplify better than other peoples thus far studied indicates not so much a lack of development as an excess of growth along purely somatic lines, with a correlative defect of development along demotic lines; and when the lines of growth are traced to the sources and conditions, it becomes fairly clear that the aberrant development of the tribe is merely the reflection of a distinctive environment operating (evidently) throughout a long period. In brief, the somatic interest of the Seri seems to center in the remarkable adjustment of the tribe to a peculiar environment—an adjustment of such delicacy as to imply interaction throughout many generations.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

by them at times. This raises the question of whether the Seri may not have reached their habitat from the peninsula, or possibly the reverse. The solution of this problem depends on an analysis of full data on physical type, speech, and culture content, and only a partly conclusive answer, discussed below, can as yet be given. In general behavior and temperament, Seri and peninsular Californians seem to have been strikingly alike; but this fact can not in itself be construed as evidence of common origin, because the similar psychology may be largely determined by similar residence and subsistence habits resting in turn on almost parallel environment; much as pastoral nomads or mariners in whatever part of the world, and with or without historical connections, are likely to exhibit analogous mental attitudes in contrast with rural or urban populations.

In any event, it is wholly unproved that the Seri possess a native endowment which is more animal-like, more dominated by instinctive impulses and less capable of cultural development, than other peoples'. In fact the improbability of such an assumption is indicated by their possession of culture traits, like certain games and their kinship system, which they either share with neighboring tribes or have developed into rather high specialization. The meagernesses of their culture are therefore evidently due to factors in their particular history or geography rather than to congenital deficiencies or abnormalities. This does not mean that it would be easy to convert the Seri to the mode of life of Pima or Mexican. Habits of irresponsibility and unsettlement once established, even through part of childhood only, are notoriously difficult to alter. Witness the Gypsies. However, such practical habit difficulties are of course no evidence as to quality of endowment.

The modern Seri are the amalgamated remnants of some three or four of a half dozen closely related Serian groups formerly recognized. The preponderant one in the fusion of these groups is likely to have been that which held Tiburon and the fronting mainland, on account of better preservation of their numbers and habits in the relatively inaccessible island refuge.

Seri physique is distinctive in physiognomy, expression, and habitus, as would be expectable in a people sharply set off from its neighbors in practises and attitudes. The measurements available show no very marked differences of gross anatomy from neighboring tribes, either in stature, head shape, or nose proportion. The head may be somewhat rounder than among Pima and Yaqui; the difference in body seems more to be one of greater slenderness than of greater height. The Seri abilities to endure hunger and fatigue and to run great distances are faculties possessed by nearly all tribes of the southwest United States and northwest Mexico.

The Seri language is intrinsically and markedly tonal, more given to consonantal accumulations than the neighboring Uto-Aztecan and